PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-10

Mishawaka before Mishawaka: the post-office name of 1833

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SUMMARY

The county histories date the Mishawaka post office to the spring of 1834 and treat the name as one given to a town first platted, on 15 July 1833, as St. Joseph Iron Works. A letter from the first postmaster shows that the name came first. Writing to Senator John Tipton on 4 September 1833, under the heading "Mishawaka, St Joseph Iron Works," Henry Yerrington explained that on 9 May 1833 he had applied, through the Detroit postmaster, "for the establishment of a Post office at this place by the name of 'Mishawaka,'" because the settlers had to travel "four and some ten miles" to the office at South Bend. The editors of the Tipton Papers, citing the Indiana State Library's index of post offices, give the office's establishment as 11 December 1833, with Yerrington as postmaster, and the federal register of 1835 lists Mishawaka with Henry Yerrington and his successor Orlando Hurd. The name Mishawaka was thus in written use two months before the town was platted under another name, and seventy-six years before it was attached to the fictional "Princess Mishawaka."

THE RECORD

1. **Henry Yerrington to John Tipton, Mishawaka, 4 September 1833, in Nellie Armstrong Robertson and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers*, vol. 2, *1828–1833* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942), p. 823**

   > *"Mishawaka, St Joseph Iron Works Ind. September 4th. 1833 … on the 9 of May last I forward through Mr Norvell the Post Master at Detroit an application for the establishment of a Post office at this place by the name of 'Mishawaka' and soliciting the appointment as Post master, and the application was recommended by the P. M. at South Bend in this county … our Citizens are compelled to travel four and some ten miles to an office ('South Bend')."*

   Indiana State Library, Tipton Papers (the letter); printed edition at the Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/the-john-tipton-papers-volume-ii-1828-1833)

2. **The editors' note to the same letter, *The John Tipton Papers*, vol. 2, p. 823, n. 12**

   > *"A post office was established at Mishawaka, December 11, 1833, with Yerrington as postmaster. Index of Indiana Post Offices, Indiana State Library."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/the-john-tipton-papers-volume-ii-1828-1833)

3. ***Register of All Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States, on the Thirtieth September, 1835* (Washington, 1835), Post Office Department, Indiana, p. 257 (printed "*257")**

   > *Under "Mishawaka," two postmasters are listed for the year: "Hy. Yerrington" ($43.20) and "Orlando Hurd" ($7.89).*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/registerofalloffunit/page/n456/mode/1up)

4. **Charles C. Chapman & Co., *History of St. Joseph County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1880), Mishawaka, p. 790**

> *"In the spring of 1834 a postoffice was established, and the Indian name 'Mishawaka' was given it at the suggestion of Mr. Yerrington, who was appointed postmaster."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofstjosep00chap)

5. ***Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, Ind.), 17 May 1834, p. 1**

> *"... the Iron Works at Mishawaka, near South Bend, have made a successful commencement of operations." (copied from the Fort Wayne Sentinel)*

Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82016416/1834-05-17/ed-1/?sp=1)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The standard county history, Chapman (1880), dates the post office to the spring of 1834 and presents the town as St. Joseph Iron Works until the office took the Indian name. The postmaster's own letter moves the name back a year: it was chosen by 9 May 1833, before the 15 July 1833 plat, and was already the letter's place-heading in September 1833; the office itself dates from 11 December 1833. This also strengthens the conclusion of the article it accompanies: the name was given to a place, by its first postmaster, generations before the "Princess Mishawaka" of 1909.

LIMITS

The establishment date of 11 December 1833 rests on the editors' citation of the Indiana State Library's index of post offices. The letter shows that Yerrington proposed the name; it does not say who suggested it to him or what it meant to him. Chapman's 'spring of 1834' may reflect when the office began work in practice; no source explains the difference. The printed edition of the Tipton Papers (1942) is quoted for the letter's

text; its scan on the Internet Archive carries a non-commercial licence, so the page itself is not reproduced.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Chapman (1880); Howard (1907); the 1875 county atlas; De Kever's city history; Bridges (1976, seen in full-text search only); Wikipedia; Jim Forte's postal-history listing (not reachable); the U.S. registers of 1833 and 1835; archive.org full text for Yerrington and Mishawaka; Chronicling America for 1833–1834. None of the modern accounts cites the 1833 letter or gives the 1833 date with the name's May application.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Michael Urbanski, "Princess Mishawaka: the princess who never was," *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/the-princess-who-never-was/
2. Timothy Edward Howard, *A History of St. Joseph County, Indiana*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1907), the city of Mishawaka. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/historyofstjosep01howa
3. Peter J. De Kever, *Mishawaka: A History*, City of Mishawaka. https://mishawaka.in.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/History-of-Mishawaka.pdf

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in Princess Mishawaka: the princess who never was (projectscroll.com/news/the-princess-who-never-was/). In the discoveries register:

- `mish-post-office-1833` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#mish-post-office-1833)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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